

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. at the Pueblo El Mirage RV Resort and Country Club. In his remarks, he referred to Josephine Franks, wife of Representative Trent Franks; James P. Weiers, speaker, Arizona State House of Representatives; Mayor Fred Waterman of El Mirage, AZ; Mayor Phil Gordon of Phoenix, AZ; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; and Lisa James, Arizona State executive director, Bush-Cheney '04 campaign.

**Remarks in a Discussion on
Medicare in Rancho Cucamonga,
California**

August 29, 2005

The President. Thank you, David. Thank you very much. Thank you. Be seated, please. Thank you all for coming. Please be seated. Thank you. So David said we went to this school together; it was called a charm school. [*Laughter*] I never won my seat for Congress. He did. Obviously, it took on him and not on me. [*Laughter*] But I want to thank him for his introduction. I want to thank him for his leadership. David Dreier cares a lot about a lot of issues. One of the issues that he's been talking to me a lot about is to make sure the Federal Government does its job in enforcing our borders to keep illegal folks out of our country.

And I want to assure you—I don't know if you remember this, but I had a job prior to President, I was the Governor of a border State. And I understand the challenges of enforcing our border. I understand the Federal Government has a role, and State government has a role, and local government has a role. And my pledge to the people of California is that the Federal Government will work closely with the State government and local government to provide assets, manpower, detention space, to do our duty, and that is to make sure this border of ours is secure.

And so I want to thank you on your leadership on that issue, David, and I thank you for working with us on that important issue.

I'm traveling in good company. I'm not talking about Dreier at this point—[*laughter*]—I'm talking about my wife, the First Lady. Thanks for coming, Laura. We're both

very excited to come to your great State, and it is a great State. We were met at the airport by Congressman Ken Calvert. I appreciate you being here, Ken. Thanks for coming. Congressman Gary Miller as well is with us, as is Congressman Joe Baca. Thank you all for being here.

I knew Brulte would amount to something one of these days. [*Laughter*] He got something named after him. I'm honored to be here with my friend Jim Brulte at the Brulte Center.

I want to thank Mayor Bill Alexander of Rancho Cucamonga. Bill, thank you for having us here today. I appreciate your hospitality. I want to thank Mayor Paul Leon of Ontario. Paul, thanks for being at the airport today.

I appreciate all the statehouse folks who are here and county folks and the local folks for joining us. Most of all, thank you all for giving me a chance to come by and discuss a really interesting opportunity for our seniors, and that is a reformed Medicare plan.

Before I get to Medicare, I got some other things I want to talk about. First, I want to remind you that the great strength of this country lies in the hearts and souls of our volunteers. We're a nation that is a compassionate, decent nation, where millions of our fellow citizens volunteer on a regular basis to help a neighbor in need. I met one such person today in Joe Graff. Joe is with us. He's been a volunteer with the Ontario Police Department for 15 years. Joe assists the police personnel with traffic control and parking tickets. If you've got one, you might want to call Joe. [*Laughter*]

But my point to you is, if you really do want to help your local community, if you want to help change America one heart at a time, take time out of your life and volunteer: Teach a child to read; tell somebody you love them; feed the hungry; and America will be a better place.

Joe, thanks for coming. I appreciate you being here.

As David said, we're praying for the folks that have been affected by this Hurricane Katrina. We're in constant contact with the local officials down there. The storm is moving through, and we're now able to assess damage or beginning to assess damage. And

I want the people to know in the affected areas that the Federal Government and the State government and the local governments will work side by side to do all we can to help get your lives back in order.

This was a terrible storm. It's a storm that hit with a lot of ferocity. It's a storm now that is moving through, and now it's the time for governments to help people get their feet on the ground.

For those of you who prayed for the folks in that area, I want to thank you for your prayers. For those of you who are concerned about whether or not we're prepared to help, don't be. We are. We're in place. We've got equipment in place, supplies in place. And once the—once we're able to assess the damage, we'll be able to move in and help those good folks in the affected areas.

David also mentioned that we're making progress overseas. And we are making progress overseas. Recently, the Iraqis came together and wrote a constitution. It's not easy to write a constitution. Look at our own history. I was reminded that several of the delegates to our own Constitutional Convention stormed out and wouldn't sign the document.

But now it's up to the Iraqi citizens to make up their minds whether or not they want to live in a constitution. It's a constitution, by the way, that guarantees women's rights. It's a constitution that guarantees religious freedom. It is a good document forged by compromise. It's a document where people came together to say, let's do what's right for a fledgling democracy. It's a document that stands in stark contrast to the days when the people's lives were run by a tyrant.

We're doing everything we can to bring the terrorists to justice. They've only got one weapon. They have no ideology of hope. They have no optimistic vision. The only thing they can do is to murder innocent people and hope that we lose our will. The success in Iraq is vital for success—for peace for our children and grandchildren. And therefore, the United States of America and our coalition will continue to work with the Iraqis to build a democracy, continue to build—to lay the foundation of peace, and continue to help the Iraqis train and prepare

so they can defend their own country against the tyrants.

David's right, it was right here in 2000, I talked about Social Security. I want to repeat right quick what I said, "If you're retired and receiving a Social Security check, you have nothing to worry about. You will get your check." You'll get your check. But you need to worry about your children and your grandchildren.

See, there's a lot of baby boomers like me getting ready to retire. Matter of fact, my retirement age is in 2008. Quite convenient. [Laughter] And there's a lot of me. There's a lot of baby boomers. And we're living longer, and we've been promised greater benefits than previous generations. And yet there are fewer people paying into the system. Now, if you add all that up, what I'm telling you is, it's going broke for younger workers. If you're receiving your check, you're in good shape. You have not a thing to worry about. Isn't that right?

But you need to worry about the young workers who are putting money into the system that is not going to be around. I'm going to keep working this issue. I believe it is essential that a President confront problems and not pass them on to future Presidents and future Congresses, and I believe it's essential this Congress act.

So in other words, I hadn't changed my mind since I came here to talk about Social Security. The other thing I worked on with Members of Congress was to fulfill our promise to our seniors that they'd have as good a health care system as possible. Medicare is a really important program; except Medicare wasn't modern. When we got to—when I got to Washington, it was a system that was kind of stuck in the past. I'll tell you why. Medicare would pay for heart surgery but not a dime for the drugs that could prevent the heart surgery from being needed in the first place. It would pay \$28,000 for ulcer surgery but not \$500 for the prescription drugs that could prevent the ulcer from occurring in the first place.

That's not a modern system. That's an antiquated system. And not only that, it was costing the taxpayers more money than necessary. It seems like to me it makes fiscal sense to say, "Let's spend the \$500 to prevent

the 28,000 from being needed.” It’s a wise use of your money, it seems like to me. But we weren’t doing it that way.

And so I called upon Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, to work together to modernize the Medicare system. And what we’re here to talk about is a strengthened Medicare program. And the reason we’re having to travel around to do so is because I fully understand a lot of people don’t want to change. In other words, people who are on Medicare say, “Look, just leave me alone. I’m not interested.” And if that’s the way you feel, that’s fine. This is voluntary program. But what I want to hear—want you to hear is there are some really good options for you to choose from if you want to. In other words, there’s a menu of opportunity now available to you.

If you’ve just recently signed up for Medicare, you know one of the reforms that we’ve put in place. It’s called “Welcome to Medicare” physical. For the first time in Medicare, the Government is now paying for a physical. Makes sense, doesn’t it? Why don’t we test you early so we can solve the problems early?

There’s preventive medicine involved with Medicare now, and that’s important. But the big change is going to come when it comes to prescription drug coverage. Seniors with no drug coverage or average drug expenses will see your drug costs cut in half. In other words, you take a look at this program, you’re going to have some big savings when it comes to drugs.

And for the first time ever, we got catastrophic coverage as a part of Medicare. In other words, once you’re out of your pocket a certain amount of money, the Government kicks in for a lot of the remainder. You see, this is a quality-of-life bill, but it’s also a peace-of-mind bill. In other words, it’s a chance to really modernize the system, on the one hand, but it’s also to provide security on the other. And that’s why there’s a catastrophic coverage in there.

If you’re a low-income senior, you will virtually pay nothing for your prescription drugs. And that’s important for you to know. If you’re a low-income senior, the Federal Government will pick up at least 95 percent of your prescription drug coverage. There

will be no gaps in your coverage. There will be low deductibles.

And so we’re here to try to encourage you, as seniors, to look at the different options for you. You know, for example, we’re going—you’ll hear from some of your fellow citizens—or our fellow citizens up here, and they’re talking about Medicare Advantage Plans. If you’re on a Medicare Advantage Plan, these plans will be strengthened under this reform package. If you’re getting your health care from your union or your former employer, there’s incentives in the bill to provide monies to make sure that your provider still provides you the health care. In other words, it’s a comprehensive piece of legislation, and it’s a good one. It’s a good one.

I know that you wept, like many of us wept, when we heard stories about people having to choose between food or medicine. Those days are gone because of this Medicare legislation. Now, we got us a timetable that people have got to pay attention to. It starts with this: On October the 1st, beneficiaries start receiving information about available drug plans. In other words, the Government is going to start making sure information is available for you all to understand that which is available to you, if you so choose to pick one, a different plan. And that starts October the 1st.

On November the 15th, you can start signing up for a plan that suits your needs. Again, I repeat, if you’re happy with what you’ve got, don’t worry about it. Just kind of take the paperwork and file it. *[Laughter]* But if you’re interested in different options, look at the information that’s being sent and know that starting November 15th, you can enroll, and starting January 1, 2006, for the first time, thanks to this piece of legislation, prescription drug benefits will—prescription drug coverage will begin for our seniors. And you got up until May 15, 2006, to sign up to pay the lowest premiums.

Now, our job is to make sure that a lot of people know what’s coming. In other words, our job is to encourage people at the State level and the local level and the Federal level to educate seniors. And that’s what we’re doing here today.

I put a good man in charge of this program, and that’s Dr. Mark McClellan. He’s

from Texas—[*laughter*]*—*which means he knows how to get something done. He's got him a Ph.D.—

Audience members. Oooh!

The President. Now, wait a minute. [*Laughter*] If I had said California, he'd have got things done too. [*Laughter*] I'm just telling you, he can get it done. That's why he's sitting where he's sitting. He's a Ph.D. Here you got on stage a C student and a Ph.D., and look who's President. He's also an M.D. But he's also responsible for making sure that information gets out. By the way, if you're interested in information, call 1-800-MEDICARE, or medicare.gov.

Mark, tell them what you've been doing.

Dr. Mark B. McClellan. We've been working to make sure that people know about the options that are coming, and there are some really good options for people here in California by the way, where I used to practice medicine before coming into Government, right here in northern California—

The President. See? [*Laughter*]

Dr. McClellan. —and in southern California as well. We've got a number of plan choices that are going to be available that are a lot less expensive than people thought.

When this bill was first passed, people were talking about the coverage costing around \$37 a month. Well, what we know from the plans that are going to be available here in California, the costs are going to average only around \$25 a month out here, and there will be plan choices available to seniors and people with a disability for less than \$20 a month. And many of them will provide extra coverage.

So this is worth taking a look at. And as you said, Mr. President, it's designed to work with the coverage that you have now. If you're lucky enough to have drug coverage from an employer, you can now get help from Medicare in paying for that employer coverage. If you've got a Medicare Advantage Plan, one of the Medicare health plans that offers some drug coverage now, well, those plans are going to offer more drug coverage next year. So no matter what situation you're in, you can get help with your drug costs from Medicare, and that help is looking especially good right here in California.

The President. One of the things that—if you want to apply for the benefits for low-income seniors, you have to fill out a form. I know that generally frightens people. It frightens me. A four-page form, that sounds like a lot. You'll be pleased to hear it's big print—16 questions on 4 pages. And the Social Security Administration has mailed out those forms.

Dr. McClellan. That's right. They've sent letters out to millions of people who they think are eligible for this coverage, because a lot of people who don't think of themselves as low income, but are struggling with their drug costs, are actually eligible for this. The eligibility goes up to people living on incomes up to close to \$20,000 a year for a couple. So that's most people who are trying to get by month to month just on their Social Security check.

The President. So it's really important to look into this program, and it's important to take a look at the forms. And for those of you out there who are trying to help our seniors, it's important for you to understand what I'm talking about. Part of making sure this works and part of making sure that the information is spread throughout our society, is sons and daughters need to pay attention to this program. You need to do your duty as a son or a daughter and get this information to your moms or your dads. That's what you need to do. You need to make sure that you help investigate what's possible and not miss a really good opportunity.

This is a good deal. And therefore, you need to follow through on it. And part of the process is to fill out this form. And it's not all that hard, but if you get stuck, there's a way to get unstuck on filling out the form.

Dr. McClellan. That's right. Just fill out the questions that you think you can answer. Send it in. Social Security will call you back and help you fill out the rest.

And Mr. President, this is extra help worth about \$4,000 altogether, so it's about \$1,000 a page for people filling out this application. It's very comprehensive drug coverage, no premiums, no deductibles, just a few dollars, usually, for the cost of your prescription, all for just a four-page form.

The President. Mark has been on the road with the Secretary of Health and

Human Services and others on a grassroots campaign. Because we understood when this started coming out that we needed to do a lot of education. Again I repeat, some folks simply don't want any change, and I understand that completely. But I urge you to take a look, and you'll find more options available. You see, the more options that are available, the more likely there's going to get—you're going to get what you want. And if you're a low-income senior, you've got to take advantage of the Government program. It is a good deal.

Now, part of making sure that we're able to get the word out is we're rallying grassroots organizations. One such organization is Larry Krutchik's organization.

Larry, thank you for coming. Tell the people what it is.

[At this point, Larry Krutchik, regional director, Medicare Today, made brief remarks.]

The President. I appreciate that. Isn't that great? I mean, to me, it's—I appreciate you doing that, and I want you to thank the volunteers who are working on this program on behalf of the seniors who are going to benefit from it.

If you're going to a church and you're interested in the project, why don't you help the elderly in your church understand that which is coming? Why don't you take a little time and find out the programs available and find out—get the forms and help somebody? This is a good deal. I know it may—you're probably saying, "Another politician saying it's a good deal." [Laughter] I'm telling you, it is. And it makes sense to pay attention to it.

And we understand we have an obligation to get out and make the information available. It's your choice. The Government is not telling you what to do. But the Government is saying, "Here's some interesting opportunities for you."

And Larry, I want to thank you for being out there and making those opportunities available.

We got another fellow here, Ken Morris. Ken, thanks for coming. What do you do to make a living?

[Ken Morris, pharmacist, made brief remarks.]

The President. One of the interesting places where we're able to make this program better known is at the pharmacies. I mean, it makes sense if you're going to pick up a prescription drug and the pharmacist is the point of contact and the pharmacist says, "Hey, look, here's a new thing coming down." And we've got a lot of pharmacists from around the United States who have signed up to help, and I want to thank the pharmacists for doing that.

What do you find when you hear—give us a sense of what you're hearing out there.

Mr. Morris. Well, it's long overdue. The seniors are welcoming this plan with open arms, as are health care professionals such as myself. It's heartbreaking for me to deal with seniors that come in, as you had mentioned, maybe with a heart surgery and to find out that they've now got a list of a half-dozen medications and they're trying to make a decision on which ones to take because they can't afford to take all of them. So it's tough; it's a long time coming.

The President. But are people beginning to become aware that there's a new Medicare bill that had been passed and some options are now becoming available?

Mr. Morris. Yes, I think so. As we get a little closer, I think, to October, I think the questions will start ramping up. But at this point, people have been getting mailings. We just need to make sure that they understand exactly what the plan is about.

The President. Yes. There's a great opportunity for those of you out there who want to help a senior citizen in your neighborhood, is to help. Get on the Internet, medicare.gov. Look it up. Find out what we're talking about. Make sure what we're talking about is exactly what the Government has got available. I think it is. I think you're going find out what we're—what Mark and I are telling you is exactly what's going to happen. But it's a fantastic opportunity.

And again, I want to thank the pharmacists. I want to thank the community activists, the grassroots organizers. This, by the way, isn't a Republican deal or a Democrat deal; this is good for America. It doesn't matter what your party is when it comes to Medicare. We just want to make sure, and the Government has an obligation to make sure,

you got a modern system that works well so that you can live in dignity. They ought to call this the “You’ve Retired in Dignity” bill, because it’s a good piece of legislation.

And we’ve got some folks up here who are concerned about their Social Security or Medicare. Joan Gest is with us. Thanks for coming.

Joan Gest. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Proud you’re here. She’s—

Ms. Gest. Very happy to be here.

The President. Her sole source of income is Social Security, by the way. I could tell—she was looking at me when I first walked in the room to meet her; she was wondering whether or not old George W. is going to take away her Social Security check.

Ms. Gest. I sure hope not.

The President. The answer is no. You’re going to get your check.

Ms. Gest. Thank you, sir.

The President. You deserve it.

Ms. Gest. And I’m on Medicare, and there’s been times that I’ve had drugs that I refused to take because they were too expensive.

The President. Yes.

Ms. Gest. And I think this plan could help me. And as a volunteer at Kaiser Hospital and as a community representative for downtown Fontana, I’m hoping to pass this word along to some of our organizations in town and some of our service groups and some of our senior citizens homes. And I hope that I’m able to do that.

The President. See, that’s great, isn’t it? Here she is somebody who was wondering what the program means for her and as well is willing to spread the word. And I hope people who are—thank you for doing that. Thank you for volunteering too.

Ms. Gest. Thank you. I’m a mother of five children.

The President. Five children.

Ms. Gest. Five step-children.

The President. Fantastic.

Ms. Gest. Twenty-seven grandchildren.

The President. Whew.

Ms. Gest. And three great-grandchildren. And I have a son, Mike, out in the audience today that—

The President. Mike listening to you?

Ms. Gest. He better be.

The President. Yes. [Laughter] Kind of like my family. [Laughter]

Joan, one of the most things—proud things—one of the things she was most proud to tell me about was the fact that she loves to volunteer. And that’s one of the great parts of the American spirit, is people like Joan are willing to—she’s willing to take time to make somebody’s life better. So I want to thank you for that. Thank you for passing the word.

Ms. Gest. Thank you.

The President. You betcha.

Myrtle Jones. Where do you live, Myrtle?

Myrtle Jones. I live in Rancho Cucamonga.

The President. Yes. Right here with the home folks.

Ms. Jones. Yes, I am. And I’ve participated here—since 1988 I’ve belonged here.

The President. That’s good.

Ms. Jones. And I’m a retired management. I managed three dry cleaning establishments, and then I retired and did some in-home nursing and retired from that. And now I’m an elder in my church, and I volunteer here and do a lot of work here. And I also have three wonderful children, Rod, Dorothy, and Richard. I have six grandchildren, five great-grandchildren.

The President. Whew.

Ms. Jones. And I have managed on my own without the help from them. [Laughter]

The President. Yes, take that. [Laughter]

[Ms. Jones made brief remarks.]

The President. Myrtle, you need to get that four-page form, and you need to look at it, and you need to fill it out.

Ms. Jones. I will.

The President. Because I think you’re going to find the strengthened Medicare program is going to help you a lot.

Ms. Jones. Oh, it will.

The President. It really will.

Ms. Jones. It really will.

The President. The purpose of coming here today—thank you all for doing this, by the way. The purpose of coming was to encourage—good job. The purpose of coming was to inform as many folks as we can, obviously, in person and on TV, that Medicare

has been strengthened, and Medicare has been modernized, and that if you're really interested in helping a senior or a senior helping yourself, look into this plan. Look into what's available.

And you can find out on medicare.gov, or you can call 1-800-MEDICARE. If you get a form, fill it out. When they send you a form to determine whether or not you're going to be eligible for this enhanced drug benefit from the Federal Government, fill it out. It doesn't do any harm to fill it out, and if you need help, somebody will help you fill it out.

The Government has an obligation to our seniors to provide a health care system. We have done that for years. Now we took it upon ourselves to make sure the health care system we provided was strong and modern, and we have done that. And pretty soon, people are going to be able to make choices if they want to. And our job at the Government level and job at the grassroot level and jobs in the community centers and community groups is to help people understand what's available.

I want to thank you all for giving me and Laura a chance to come back to Rancho Cucamonga. It's a beautiful place you got here. We appreciate your hospitality. May God bless you all. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. at the James L. Brulte Senior Center. In his remarks, he referred to former California State Senator Jim Brulte; Mayor William "Bill" J. Alexander of Rancho Cucamonga, CA; Mayor Paul S. Leon of Ontario, CA; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Proclamation 7919—National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, 2005

August 29, 2005

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Ovarian cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer deaths among women in the United States. Each year, thousands of women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and thousands die from the disease. During National

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, we strive to raise awareness of ovarian cancer and promote early detection and treatment of this disease.

Early detection is essential to the successful treatment of ovarian cancer. The 5-year survival rate is higher than 90 percent for ovarian cancer patients whose disease is caught during the first stage of development. Most ovarian cancer cases are diagnosed at an advanced stage, however, because no reliable screening test exists for the disease. Because the early signs of ovarian cancer are easy to miss and often resemble the signs of other conditions, it is important for women to talk with their doctors about detection and be aware of the risk factors and symptoms of this cancer.

There is more we need to learn about how best to prevent, detect, and treat ovarian cancer. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) is currently sponsoring a study on genetic and environmental factors that may increase the risk of ovarian cancer. In addition, the NCI is sponsoring clinical trials to explore new ways to screen for and detect ovarian cancer. Researchers are studying new treatment options, including biological therapies, anticancer drugs, vaccines, and other therapies to treat resistant forms of ovarian cancer. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will spend almost \$4.6 million, and the Department of Defense's Ovarian Cancer Research Program will invest an estimated \$10 million.

As we observe National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, we recognize the courage and strength of women battling ovarian cancer, and of their families and friends who love and support them. Our Nation is grateful for the hard work and commitment of our dedicated researchers and medical professionals. With continued effort, we can raise awareness of ovarian cancer and find new ways to prevent and treat this deadly disease.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 2005 as National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. I call upon government officials,